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Narrative Section of a Successful Application

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Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: A World in Flux: The Politics of Space in Nineteenth-Century Izmir

Institution: College of William and Mary

Project Director: Sibel Zandy-Sayek

Grant Program: Fellowships Program

A World in Flux: The Politics of Space in Nineteenth-Century Izmir

This book analyzes the modernizing efforts in Izmir/Smyrna as a reflection of the larger drive to modernize in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. This is the first study that sets aside the "sick man of Europe" stereotype along with narrowly constructed nationalist or colonial interpretations. It uses a new interpretive framework and a wide variety of sources to examine the actual processes by which social, political, and economic life in the city were transformed, as its physical structure and visual appearance changed during the nineteenth century. Izmir was the second largest city in the Empire, significant for its commerce and shipping. It acquired the Empire's first modern land registry (1855), two railway lines (1857 and 1864), street lighting (1862), a model city government (1867), and a modern harbor and waterfront promenade (1875). Like Salonica, Alexandria, and other Eastern Mediterranean seaports shaped by European capitalist expansion, Izmir saw the creation of numerous European-style buildings and commercial institutions such as clubs, cafés, banks, insurance agencies, steamship companies, and warehouses. It also was home to the Empire's first newspapers, thus at the forefront of popular efforts to forge new sites for a modern civic discourse.

The creation and implementation of these new architectural and discursive spaces in Izmir demonstrate substantial European intrusion, but also the continuing vitality of the Ottoman state. Between 1839 and 1876, in the face of increasing European imperialism and divisive nationalist movements, Ottoman bureaucrats undertook extensive administrative and legal reforms known as the Tanzimat in order to centralize the multinational empire. By controlling the political and legal processes as well as landownership rules, Ottoman reformers were able to counter European ambitions and maintain the upper hand over the diverse religious and national groups in the city. The competition of all these parties for control of space within the city fueled Izmir's commercial prosperity and the creation of its nineteenth-century physical structure.

This study breaks entirely new ground by utilizing overlooked topographical evidence along with textual sources to reveal how urban space became a battleground for advancing the interests of the reformist Ottoman state, imperial European powers, and the multi-ethnic local elite. It builds on recent scholarship in cultural geography and postcolonial studies, but develops these perspectives by mining visual and topographical evidence—photographs, prints, urban plans, insurance maps, property transactions, city directories, and geographical studies—to analyze the now largely lost physical world of nineteenth-century Izmir. In doing so, it brings to light dynamic public spheres that radically challenge the neatly defined ethnic, national, and religious categories heretofore used to imagine the Ottoman city. To do so, the analysis moves beyond conventional architectural studies

that present the physical fabric as an objective fact, equally and identically accessible to everyone, to consider the jurisdictions that governed these spaces, the social conventions that animated them, and the different ways people interpreted and attached themselves to them. Further, by playing these sources off textual documents that disclose the perceived priorities of diverse social actors—newspapers, European consular reports, Ottoman state records, travel and missionary accounts, and memoirs—it exposes the complex meanings, interests, and power relations embedded in physical space. Situating and contrasting my work with others' is fully developed in the Introduction.

A WORLD IN FLUX probes the most representative conflicts over the reorganization of physical space, namely the new land registry, modern street services, urban infrastructure, and ritual uses of public spaces. These conflicts also determine the structure of the book. Chapter one, "A Cosmopolitan Port in the Remaking," presents the dramatic changes from a low-built urban fabric, interrupted by occasional churches and mosques in the early nineteenth century, to three or four story-high stone buildings laid out on more orderly street patterns. The next four chapters explore the relationship between these physical changes and the competing forces and constituencies that shaped Izmir's transformations.

As James Scott argues in SEEING LIKE A STATE, imposing a uniform land-tax system is a central feature of the modern state. Chapter two, "Asserting State Control: Urban Property, Taxation and Citizenship," shows how the reformist Ottoman state used modern land registration to retain control over the reshaping of their city. As a cosmopolitan seaport, Izmir had long been home to foreign nationals who, although restricted from acquiring property in the empire, had circumvented these limitations by using locals as a front to comply with Islamic law. By contrast, the new European-derived land registration system, undercut such possibilities by unambiguously linking each urban parcel to a specific taxpayer and making Ottoman nationality a prerequisite for ownership. As a result, a heated conflict pitted state authorities, foreign legations, and property owners against one another bringing out the changing meaning of urban property in Tanzimat Izmir.

As in numerous other European cities that had grown considerably in the nineteenth-century, Izmir's multinational local elite felt that it was necessary to start improving the facilities in their city. "Ordering the Streets: Conflicting Rights and Overlapping Jurisdictions," chapter three, reveals how Izmir's savvy elite, actively lobbied to obtain a municipal organization that supervised the paving, cleaning, lighting, and policing of the streets. Proficient in both European and local transactions, they wrote petitions to domestic and foreign authorities and letters to the empire's newly established newspapers to devise new civic platforms to express

apprehension about the despicable streets. But by claiming their extraterritorial rights, they also refused to incur the cost associated with such services. The protracted disputes between local authorities, consular agents, and elite Smyrniots over who should pay for such services, what constitutes public nuisance, and who should have rights to the streets illustrate how post-Tanzimat streets and public spaces came to embody new ideals of physical order and social behavior.

Izmir's physical reorganization came to a head over the creation of a new waterfront, integral to the fabric of the city. The conflict over the construction of the two-and-a-half-mile long quay and promenade, is at the core of chapter four, "Shaping the New Quay: Public Works and the Public Good." It illustrates how the architectural modernization of the waterfront became the site for contending groups to manipulate rival definitions of public good and public space. The new quay was intended to create a pleasing prospect for the city. At the same time, it had to meet the needs of the merchant community for efficient loading of freight, and provide a continuous line of vision for state agents seeking to put an end to smuggling. These conflicting demands resulted in prolonged debates over who constitutes the public of Izmir and what public good entails, embodying, in essence, the larger power struggles of all competing constituencies within the city.

The need to stem the tide of secessionist nationalisms drove Tanzimat reformers to introduce new forms of public rituals, such as the Sultan's birthday, to promote a uniform political identity throughout the multi-ethnic empire. The last chapter, "Performing Community: Rituals and Public Space," focuses on how public spaces were used by different local groups to advance conflicting perspectives and programs. In Izmir, rituals that reified modern Ottoman state power coexisted with other communal celebrations that were newly redesigned to express emerging nationalistic sentiments, such as the Corpus Christi procession or the Greek Orthodox Easter parade. This chapter analyzes how the same physical spaces within the city were temporarily taken over and visually refashioned to convey competing forms of political community, exposing the challenges of creating a unified Ottoman polity. At the same time, these ritual performances demonstrate how physical space produces and sustains social and political identities.

The epilogue, "Urban Space and Competing Public Spheres," argues that the spatial reordering brought about as a result of these conflicts galvanized local groups into action, propelling them to form often fluid alliances and create public spheres for themselves, which were comfortable and acceptable. By grounding the formation of public spheres in actual struggles over the shaping of the physical environment, A WORLD IN FLUX offers a new interpretation of the Ottoman city that links state/society, Europeans/Ottomans, natives/foreigners, and Muslims/non-Muslims in ways

that challenge oppositional categories.

A WORLD IN FLUX contributes to existing scholarship in two critical ways. First, by developing a new analytic framework, it utilizes diverse sources for evidence unique to the production and experience of urban space in the city, and hence it is able to demonstrate how the physical fabric can be used to interpret socio-economic and political relations. Widely seen as the primary focus of modernization efforts, nineteenth-century cities have garnered much attention from historians. However, with few exceptions, these studies view the new architectural spaces and institutions as a mere by-product of social-economic relations and political actions. By contrast, A WORLD IN FLUX shows how by their very existence, these new visual spaces bounded and shaped human experience, thereby constituting social life and engendering change. Using methodologies derived from human geography and cultural landscape studies, it reveals how Izmir's physical structure became an indispensable tool for various interest groups to assert their positions and advance their agendas.

Second, starting from actual disputes over physical space, rather than preconceived social categories, A WORLD IN FLUX brings out the fluidity of religious, ethnic, and national identities in Ottoman cities. Interpretations of Ottoman cities have up till now been shaped by the ethno-religious community (or millet). This legacy of nationalist historiography is further reified in narratives of Izmir. The burning of the city following nationalist struggles in 1922 profoundly marked historical memory, reducing the nineteenth century to a period of incommensurable national enmities and hopelessly prejudicing historical studies. While religion and ethnicity played an important role in formulating and legitimating social behavior, they did not confine people's everyday actions. The struggles detailed in this study demonstrate the extent to which local groups relied on pragmatic and temporary alliances that took advantage of their differential rights, thereby providing a much needed historiographical corrective to nationalist narratives and revealing the essentially modern character of these struggles.

Currently, I have completed all archival research and have rough drafts of all chapters except the introduction, chapters one and two, and the epilogue. The University of Washington Press has shown preliminary interest in the manuscript. A one-year NEH Fellowship would allow me to take time off from my teaching to complete my book for submission for publication.

A WORLD IN FLUX presents a new interpretation of how a major city in the Ottoman Empire modernized by employing a novel multifaceted model of analysis. Eschewing the westernization or colonial city paradigms, which privilege the West as the exclusive source of modern transformations, it uncovers the divergent conceptions of modernity held by the competing parties and interests in the city. The conflicts investigated by this study also

expose the tensions inherent in competing and concurrent notions of property rights, urban governance, public good, and citizenship, which are central to how many European cities modernized. As a result, it places Izmir in the broader context of modernization efforts occurring in many parts of the world in the nineteenth century.

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